

March 7, 2023

Testimony of
FRIENDS OF CONNECTICUT SPORTSMEN
Before the
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE on

SB 234 AN ACT CONCERNING THE REGULATORY SERVICES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE

HB 5141 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF CERTAIN FISH SPECIES

HB 5143 AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN OFFICE OF AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

S.B. No. 239 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE USE OF CERTAIN RODENTICIDES FOR THE PROTECTION
OF HAWKS, RAPTORS AND OTHER WILDLIFE

H.B. No. 5289 AN ACT CONCERNING THE NIGHTTIME LIGHTING OF STATE-OWNED BUILDINGS
AT CERTAIN TIMES FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS

Senator Cohen, Representative Gresko, Senator Miner, Representative Harding and
Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee:

Following is testimony on several bills reserved for hearing today from Friends of Connecticut
Sportsmen.

**SB 234 AN ACT CONCERNING THE REGULATORY SERVICES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE**

Friends of CT Sportsmen has concerns with the language in SB 234 as written. Specifically, the bill only allows kennel licenses for breeders who breed two or more litters per year, without updating the legal definition. However, many people purchase their animals and do not use them for breeding, but still compete in events sponsored by the major dog registries. The bill also gives wide discretion to animal control officers by leaving terms like “facility” and correcting “conditions.” The language also doesn’t provide for a process to appeal an animal control officer’s determination.

Friends of CT Sportsmen also has concerns with the licensing section’s electronic database requirement with no confidentiality protections, which poses an unnecessary risk to responsible breeders by activists. In addition, the current language implies that there has been a determination that there is a dog overpopulation problem by requiring spay and neutered dogs to obtain licenses. Some dog owners may choose to breed their dog. Currently, dogs that are not spayed or neutered pay a higher license fee. If the goal of the bill is to streamline licensing, the spay and neuter requirement is an overreach.

Friends of CT Sportsmen would like to echo and support the testimony offered by the American Kennel Club on SB 234 and urge the Committee to address its concerns before voting the bill out of Committee.

HB 5141 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF CERTAIN FISH SPECIES

Friends of Connecticut Sportsmen supports HB 5141, which is a positive measure to support conservation and help ensure that forage fish populations remain abundant into the future. Furthermore, it is our understanding that the proposed possession limits will not require CT bait fishermen to reduce their reported harvest. The proposed measures are not intended to reduce current harvest levels, rather they are intended to constrain future increases with the intent of ensuring long-term sustainability.

Healthy populations of forage fish are essential for supporting abundant gamefish populations and for maintaining thriving commercial and recreational fisheries. Forage fish populations are also an important food source for many of the birds, reptiles and marine mammals that live in and adjacent to Connecticut's waters and wetlands.

Friends of Connecticut Sportsmen urges the Committee to make two changes to the bill, as specified by the Fisheries Advisory Council (FAC). Specifically, FAC recommends the bill should be incorporated into Sec. 26-127, which pertains to conservation of bait species, instead of 26-142a. The FAC also recommends the removal of Section 2 of this bill pertaining to bait dealer since the intent of the bill is to limit the harvest and possession of these forage species on the waters of the state and is not intended to limit the numbers that can be possessed at a place of business.

HB 5143 AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN OFFICE OF AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

The work that CAES does is important to lake organizations, municipalities, and other state agencies, all of whom are struggling to prevent the spread and manage the damage caused by aquatic invasive species. The Fisheries Advisory Council (FAC) agrees that an Office of Aquatic Invasive Species at the CAES would be well positioned to conduct aquatic invasive species research; serve as a repository for state-wide data; perform regular surveys; educate the public about aquatic invasive species; and provide guidance to municipalities. Friends of Connecticut Sportsmen also supports the recommendation of the FAC, that the proposed Office of Aquatic Invasive Species be part of the Invasive Plant Council for the purpose of coordination. The Invasive Plant Council is already established in statute and is required to report to the Environment Committee annually. The Council is tasked with serving as a liaison on invasive plant issues and its membership includes many of the same organizations mentioned in HB 5143.

Finally, Friends of Connecticut Sportsmen supports the recommendations outlined in the Fisheries Advisory Council testimony, that two tasks be added to the new Office. Specifically, (1) the Office control efforts need to be better monitored to avoid damaging ecosystems and fisheries, and (2) that the new Office include native plant restoration among its responsibilities.

S.B. No. 239 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE USE OF CERTAIN RODENTICIDES FOR THE PROTECTION OF HAWKS, RAPTORS AND OTHER WILDLIFE

Friends of Connecticut Sportsmen supports the comments of the experts at the Connecticut Audubon Society, that the intent of SB 239 is right, but that the bill should be stronger in that it should empower the Wildlife Division to oversee the application of rodenticides on state property. In addition, the Wildlife Division should offer educational programs and materials for the public, private entities and municipalities to recommend rodent control options that may be less damaging to wildlife. Such resources would help stop secondary rodenticide poisoning in Connecticut.

Like the Audubon Society, Friends of Connecticut Sportsmen strongly supports the intent of this legislation to protect raptors and other wildlife from the secondary effects of certain rodenticides. Unfortunately, we believe that the bill as written will have little positive effect since minimal amounts of rodenticide are utilized on state property and often when they are, it is to protect an endangered species from an introduced predator.

Friends of Connecticut Sportsmen urges the Committee to work closely with the Audubon Society to put more teeth into the bill using the Audubon Society's expertise as well as those of the US EPA and our recreational falconers and other experienced sportsmen so that the correct solutions for Connecticut are implemented.

H.B. No. 5289 AN ACT CONCERNING THE NIGHTTIME LIGHTING OF STATE-OWNED BUILDINGS AT CERTAIN TIMES FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS

Friends of Connecticut Sportsmen supports HB 5289. Window collisions to lead to a high amount of bird deaths as a general rule and this is a simple measure that the state can take to reduce incidents with its own buildings. The action taken by passage of this bill will serve as an example for private building owners and we hope that some data can be gathered on the effectiveness the reduction in lighting has for the protection of birds at the affected state buildings.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on these bills. Please do not hesitate to contact Julie Cammarata, Friends of Connecticut Sportsmen's lobbyist, at friendsofconnecticutsportsmen@gmail.com and (203) 496-0997 if you have any questions pertaining to this testimony.

Sincerely,

Keith Cagle

Keith Cagle, President
Friends of Connecticut Sportsmen